

**ARIZONA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT
HERITAGE DATA MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

Animal Abstract

Element Code: ARACJ02012

Data Sensitivity: No

CLASSIFICATION, NOMENCLATURE, DESCRIPTION, RANGE

NAME: *Aspidoscelis burti xanthonotus*

COMMON NAME: Red-backed Whiptail

SYNONYMS: *Cnemidophorus xanthonotus*, *Cnemidophorus sacki xanthonotus*,
Cnemidophorus burti xanthonotus

FAMILY: Sauria: Teiidae

AUTHOR, PLACE OF PUBLICATION: Duellman and Lowe, 1953.

TYPE LOCALITY:

TYPE SPECIMEN:

TAXONOMIC UNIQUENESS: Some 25 species in genus. Two subspecies in *A. burti*, both of which occur in Arizona and include *A. b. xanthonotus* and *A. b. strictogrammas* (is widespread). Some herpetologists refer to this species as *A. xanthonotus*.

DESCRIPTION: A large, slim lizard measuring around 3-4.5 inches (7.6-11.4 cm) from snout to vent. Stebbins (1966) reports sizes of 3.5-5.5 inches (9-14 cm) snout-vent. The tail is long and thin, and usually brown; orange in young individuals. Behler and King (1979), report the total length of the species as 11-17.7 inches (28-45 cm). The back is reddish brown to orange colored with light spots or blotches and somewhat faint stripes. There is red on the head, and the sides and legs are usually light grayish to blue gray. Stebbins (1966) reports a dark green dorsum with pale spots and no stripes on large adults, six stripes and a vertebral on smaller individuals. The back scales are small and granular. The belly is uniform gray to white, with 8 lengthwise rows of large, smooth rectangular belly scales.

AIDS TO IDENTIFICATION: The Giant Spotted Whiptail (*A. b. stictogrammus*) is larger than the Red-backed Whiptail (*A. b. xanthonotus*), has large light spots, and red on only the head and neck.

ILLUSTRATIONS: Color drawing (Stebbins 1966: plate 29)
Color photo (Behler and King 1979: plate 416)

TOTAL RANGE: Southwest-central border of Arizona, in Pima and Maricopa counties, and Northern Sonora. For the species: southern Arizona from Santa Catalina and Chiricahua Mountains, south to Gulf of California.

RANGE WITHIN ARIZONA: Pima County: Quitobaquito Hills, Ajo Range, and Ajo, Puerto Blanco and Agua Dulce mountains. Maricopa County: Sand Tank and Saucedo mountains.

SPECIES BIOLOGY AND POPULATION TRENDS

BIOLOGY: An alert fast-moving lizard, with a diurnal activity pattern. They are most active from spring to fall, and inactive in cold temperatures and extreme heat.

REPRODUCTION: An oviparous lizard that lays 3-7 eggs per clutch, in early-mid summer. Eggs are laid in underground burrows/dens.

FOOD HABITS: Red-backed Whiptails eat insects and spiders.

HABITAT: In Arizona, they inhabit canyons and hills in juniper-oak woodlands, down to sonoran upland desert habitats, among dense shrubby vegetation near and on the banks of semi-arid permanent streams and arroyos. In the Saucedo Mountains, they have been observed on volcanic/rocky slopes.

ELEVATION: 1,070 – 3,500 ft (326-1068 m).

PLANT COMMUNITY: In the Saucedo Mountains, they were observed in a community consisting of mesquite (*Prosopis*), paloverde (*Cercidium*), ocotillo (*Fouquieria splendens*), wolfberry (*Lycium*), and saguaro (*Cereus giganteus*).

POPULATION TRENDS: Apparently stable.

SPECIES PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION

ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT STATUS:

None (USDI, FWS 1996)
[C2 USDI, FWS 1994]

STATE STATUS:

None

OTHER STATUS:

Forest Service Sensitive (USDA, FS Region
3 1999)
None (USDI, BLM AZ 2005)
[Bureau of Land Management Sensitive
(USDI, BLM AZ 2000)]

MANAGEMENT FACTORS: Limited distribution.

PROTECTIVE MEASURES TAKEN:

SUGGESTED PROJECTS: Distribution, population, habitat and life history studies.

LAND MANAGEMENT/OWNERSHIP: BIA – Tohono O’odham Nation; DOD – Barry M. Goldwater Air Force Range; FWS – Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge; NPS – Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument.

SOURCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION

REFERENCES:

- Behler, J.L. and F.W. King. 1979. The Audubon Society field guide to North American reptiles and amphibians. Alfred A. Knopf. Pp. 554-555.
- Duellman and Lowe 1953. Nat. Hist. Mus. 120:1-8.
- Integrated Taxonomic Information System (ITIS). Retrieved 3/26/2003 from ITIS. <http://www.itis.usda.gov>.
- Lowe, C.H. 1964. Amphibians and reptiles. The vertebrates of Arizona, University of Arizona Press, Tucson. Pp.165.
- Stebbins, R.C. 1954. Amphibians and reptiles of western North America. McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc. New York. Pp.289-290.
- Stebbins, R.C. 1966. A field guide to western reptiles and amphibians. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston. Pp.127.
- Stebbins, R.C. 1985. A field guide to western reptiles and amphibians. Second edition, revised. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston. Pp.153.
- USDA, Forest Service Region 3. 1999. Regional Forester’s Sensitive Species List.
- USDI, Bureau of Land Management. 2000. Arizona BLM Sensitive Species List. Instruction Memorandum No. AZ-2000-018.
- USDI, Bureau of Land Management. 2005. Arizona BLM Sensitive Species List.
- USDI, Fish and Wildlife Service. 1994. Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Animal Candidates Review for Listing as Endangered or Threatened Species; Proposed Rule. Federal Register 59(219):58993.
- USDI, Fish and Wildlife Service. 1996. Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants: Review of Plant and Animal Taxa that are Candidates for Listing as Endangered or Threatened Species. Federal Register 61(40):7596-7613.
- Vance, T. 1978. A field key to the whiptail lizards, Part I: the whiptails of the United States. Bull. Maryland Herp. Soc. 14(1):1-9(CR-filed in *C. inornatus arizonae*)

MAJOR KNOWLEDGEABLE INDIVIDUALS:

- C. R. Schwalbe, University of Arizona, Tucson.
- T. R. Van Devender, Arizona Sonoran Desert Museum, Tucson.
- J. W. Wright, LA County Museum.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Revised: 1991-03-19 (???)
1997-03-05 (SMS)
2003-03-27 (SMS)

To the user of this abstract: you may use the entire abstract or any part of it. We do request, however, that if you make use of this abstract in plans, reports, publications, etc. that you credit the Arizona Game and Fish Department. Please use the following citation:

Arizona Game and Fish Department. 20XX (= **year of last revision as indicated at end of abstract**). X...X (= **taxon of animal or plant**). Unpublished abstract compiled and edited by the Heritage Data Management System, Arizona Game and Fish Department, Phoenix, AZ. X pp.